

Vita's Biological control for wax moths to save global beekeeping industry millions

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Beekeepers across the globe can now have access to an organic and natural control product for one of their biggest out-of-season pests: wax moth. Vita (Europe) Ltd has just launched B401 (also known as Certan), a biological control that is up to 100% effective against wax moth, but is harmless to bees, humans and the environment.

Wax moths can cause huge problems for beekeepers by decimating honeycombs that have been put into seasonal storage. B401, a concentrated solution of the micro-organism *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp *aizawai*, kills the wax moth larvae and is easily applied as a preventative measure by spraying a diluted amount directly onto combs just before they are put into storage. B401 will be available globally through Vita's global distributor network.

B401 has many advantages over other treatments such as PDCB (paradichlorobenzene) crystals which are toxic to humans and honeybees and leave residues in wax and honey.

“Wax moth can be an extremely destructive pest and can destroy empty combs in a very short space of time,” explained Dr Max Watkins, Technical Director of Vita. “In the USA it is estimated that wax moth damage costs the industry more than \$5 million annually. Wax moth is a worldwide pest and causes most damage in areas where winters are mild.”

Watkins continued: “We are already receiving many enquiries from Greece and other countries where several major brands of honey had to be recalled because they contained unacceptably high levels of paradichlorobenzene. As a completely natural product that leaves no residues, B401 enables beekeepers to keep their produce pure.”

Unlike their larval stages, adult wax moth cause no physical damage to combs but both adults and larvae can transfer pathogenic bacteria to the wax in their faeces. It is important to target the larvae as the most destructive and harmful stage of this pest. B401 acts by producing a natural toxin specific for the moth larvae. The larvae ingest the spores of B401 which then germinate in the gut and release the toxin which destroys the gut lining, killing the larvae. The reproductive cycle of the wax moth is therefore stopped.

Notes To Editors

About Vita (Europe) Ltd

Vita (Europe) Ltd is a mite control and honeybee health specialist based in the UK and operating across the globe. Vita researches, develops, manufactures and markets acaricide products and is the world's dominant supplier of honeybee health products to the honey and pollination industries.

In the development of new and ecologically-sensitive approaches to mite pest control, Vita collaborates with universities including Cardiff, Milan, Udine, and institutes including the *Tierhygienisches Institut* (Institute of Animal Health) in Freiburg, Germany and the UK Central Science Laboratory. Vita's innovative research and development work has received support from the UK Government.

Vita's products are available through a network of 40 distributors in 47 countries and have been registered by more than 60 veterinary authorities. Its product range includes anti-varroa acaricides (Apistan® and Apiguard®), wax moth controls, and foulbrood diagnostic kits. All products are designed as elements of Integrated Pest Management programmes to inhibit the build-up of resistance and wherever possible to use natural compounds and biological controls that are benign to all but the target pests.

As a result of its primary research of natural control agents, Vita is currently engaged in new projects exploring mite control in the agricultural, veterinary, and horticultural industries as well as public health and human allergen control.

Vita has purchased the B401 wax moth control product as part of its acquisition of Swarm SAS, a French company. Swarm will now be known as Vita-Swarm SAS.

Wax moths

Adult female wax moths (greater and lesser wax moths: *Galleria mellonella* and *Achroia grisella*) fly at night and lay eggs on honeycomb and in tiny crevices in hives. After a few days the larvae hatch, crawl onto the comb, and begin to feed, damaging or destroying combs by boring through the cells as they consume cocoons, cast skins, and pollen. As they chew through the wax, they spin silken galleries for protection, reducing combs to a mass of debris and dust. They also pollute the combs with faeces, which may contain pathogenic bacteria and a mass of webbing, rendering what is left of the wax comb, useless.

Media Enquiries

Stephen Fleming at Palam Communications

Tel +44 (0) 1635 299116

Email sfleming@palam.co.uk

Web www.palam.co.uk

General Enquiries

Jeremy Owen

Vita (Europe) Ltd

Tel +44 (0)1256 473 176

Email j.owen@vita-europe.com

Web www.vita-europe.com